1: Roth--37
116, 372, 609

(No date) 1890

Tasmanians

"These savages were much surprised at seeing us kindle the spongy bark of the Eucalyptus resinifera in the focus of a burning-glass. He, who appeared the most intelligent among them, was desirous of trying the effects of the lens himself, threw the converging rays of the sun upon his thigh by its means; but the pain he felt took from him all inclination to repeat the experiment. [WEL: citing La Billardière, I, pp. 181-211; 1792]."

1: Roth--96 (No date) 1890 Tasmanians
116, 175, 372

"Strange as it may appear, the natives were at one time supposed by the colonists to have been unacquainted with the art of making fire! Calder declares (Journ. pp. 19-20): 'They were ignorant of any method of procuring fire.' Dove makes a similar statement, only he uses more words to say it in (I. p. 250), and Backhouse (p. 99) 'learned that the aborigines of Van Diemen's Land had no artifical method of obtaining fire, before their acquaintance with Europeans; they say they obtained it first from the sky--probably meaning by lightning.' This error has been widely diffused, although there is ample evidence to show, that not only did the Tasmanians know how to procure fire, but also tending to show, that they had a knowledge of procuring it by means of two quite distinct methods."

"Fourneaux found in one of the huts (Cook's Sec. Voy. Bk. I. ch. vii.) 'the stone they strike fire with, and tinder made of bark, but of what tree could not be distinguished.' La Billardière (I. ch. v. p. 222) met with baskets containing 'pieces of flint and fragments of the bark of a tree as soft as the best tinder. These savages, undoubtedly, procure themselves fire by striking two pieces of flint together.' Mortimer relates (p. 20) that in some of the baskets were a few flints and stones, and a little dried grass; from which circumstance I conclude they produce fire by collision.' On the other hand, Davies (p. 419) was informed that they obtained it by rubbing round rapidly in their hands a piece of hard pointed stick, the pointed end being inserted into a notch in another piece of dry wood.' James Scott also says that they knew how to make fire 'by friction of two pieces of wood' (Papers, Roy. Soc. Tas. July, 1873). 'They procured fire from the friction of a stick, rapidly moved between the palms of their hands, with the point bedded in a piece of soft bark; but as it was difficult at times to obtain fire by this means, especially in wet weather, they generally, in their peregrinations, carried with them a firestick, lighted at their last encampment' (Melville, p. 347). Their [97] fire-sticks consisted in pieces of decayed wood lighted at one end and burning slowly (La Billardière, II. ch. x. pp. 26-63), or of a 'sort of lighted bark torch' (Péron, p. 220). Mrs. Meredith says, that when the natives crossed over to Maria Island, 'they provided a little raised platform on the raft, on which they carried some lighted fuel to kindle their fire when they

arrived there' (p. 139). 'They always made very small fires, and from a peculiar art in laying the sticks, the smoke, in calm weather, would rise like a coiling pillar; few, if any, of the whites could imitate them in this respect, and native fires were, at all times, easily distinguished from those of bushrangers, or settlers exploring or hunting' (Melville, p. 346)."

"The following is the legend of the origin of fire and of the Apotheosis of two Heroes, by the aborigines of Tasmania, as related by a native of the Oyster Bay Tribe; 'My father, my grandfather, all of them lived a long time ago, all over the country; they had no fire. Two black fellows came, they slept at the foot of a hill--a hill in my own country. On the summit of a hill they were seen by my fathers, my countrymen, on the top of the hill they were seen standing: they threw fire like a star, --it fell among the black men, my countrymen. They were frightened--they fled away, all of them; after a while they returned, --they hastened and made a fire, --a fire with wood; no more was fire lost in our land. The two black fellows are in the clouds; in the clear night you see them like two stars. (1) These are they who brought fire to my fathers."

"1. Castor and Pollux."